

a passageway extending through the proximal hub and elongated body portions,
the passageway being defined by an inner surface of the sheath; and

(b) a valve comprising

a foam material filling at least some of the length of the passageway in the
elongated body portion, the length of the foam material within the passageway
being greater than the width of the foam material at any point within the
passageway, and

one or more self-sealing slits in the foam material, none of the slits extending in
width to the inner surface of the sheath, the one or more slits capable of
allowing the flexible medical device to pass therethrough and sealing around
the device.

24. Apparatus for facilitating the insertion of a flexible medical device into a body,
comprising:

(a) a sheath, comprising

a proximal hub portion,

an elongated body portion extending distally from the proximal hub portion, at
least some of the elongated body portion capable of being placed into the
body, and

a passageway extending through the proximal hub and elongated body portions,
the passageway being defined by an inner surface of the sheath; and

(b) a valve, comprising

a foam material filling at least some of the length of the passageway in the
elongated body portion, the length of the foam material within the passageway
being greater than the width of the foam material at any point within the
passageway, the foam material being affixed to a portion of the inner surface
of the sheath, and

one or more self-sealing slits in the foam material, the one or more slits capable of
allowing the flexible medical device to pass therethrough and sealing around
the device.

35. Apparatus for facilitating the insertion of a flexible medical device into a body, comprising:

(a) a sheath, comprising

a proximal hub portion,

an elongated body portion extending distally from the proximal hub portion, and

a passageway extending through the proximal hub and elongated body portions;

and

(b) a valve, comprising

an injected foam material filling at least some of the length of the passageway in the elongated body portion, the length of the foam material within the

passageway being greater than the width of the foam material at any point

within the passageway, and

one or more self-sealing slits in the foam material, the foam material and the one

or more slits serving as the valve in the passageway of the sheath.

REMARKS

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-45 are pending in the application; however, claims 1-10 have been withdrawn from consideration as being drawn to unelected species. Claims 11, 24, and 35 are the independent claims under consideration.

Amended Claims

Applicant hereby amends claims 11, 24, and 35. No new matter has been introduced by these amendments. Support for these amendments can be found throughout the specification, for example, at page 9, lines 10-23 and in FIGS. 1-3.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 11, 17, 18, 22, 24, 34, 35, and 45 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 5,599,305 to Hermann *et al.* ("Hermann").

Further, claims 11, 12-16, 19-21, 23, 24-33, 35-44 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,083,207 to Heck ("Heck"). Applicant expressly reserves the right to overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) by submitting an affidavit or declaration under 37 C.F.R. 1.131 at a later date.